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others (see Pl. 4). Here the women work, cook, and gossip; the men may join them if they wish, except the boys wearing the *tapi* (leaf hat connected with puberty ceremonies), to whom all that portion of the village is rigorously taboo.

The interior is alike in all. There are no dividing partitions. The floor is the bare earth, trodden hard. The only furniture is a row of broad planks propped up on small logs, along one side of the hut, which serve as beds. Short lengths of bamboo are used as pillows. Between each plank is just space enough for a small fire. There is probably a place for roasting taro with the aid of hot stones, the native oven, at the farther end of the hut near the women's entrance. Cooking pots, the cleaned-out coco-nut shells used to store water, packs for carrying taro, and a few personal possessions, lie on the ground; sometimes a plank is laid across two poles to form a shelf on which such objects can be kept out of the way. Bundles containing more valuable property hang from the rafters, tied up in banana fibre or old loin-cloths. Every returned plantation hand is the proud possessor of a wooden box with lock and key, part of the kit which must be provided by the employer for each of his 'boys' when they 'sign on', which he displays in a prominent position. All sorts of treasures such as medicine bundles, knives, &c., are stowed away between the thatch and the supporting rafters. Nets and banana-fibre straps for carrying burdens hang over the cross-poles that form part of the framework of the hut, and there is usually a basket containing some pieces of cold taro in case any one feels hungry at a time when it is not convenient to cook.

As a rule, the household consists of father, mother, and children. In the case of polygynous marriages, each wife will usually have her own hut, particularly if she has children, and the husband distributes his company as he pleases, spending a certain amount of time with the woman who ranks as his chief wife, but most of it with the one who for the time being stands highest in favour. A wife who is old or incapacitated, or one whose children have all started out for themselves, will often share a hut with one of the other wives, not always amicably. In some of the Buka villages large huts are now built, housing all the wives of one man; the interior of these is partitioned off into rooms for each. An aged parent of either sex may also form part of the household, the taboo between mother-in-law and son-in-law being relaxed when the former is old.

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2. *Flesh food*

262 Pig (*gū*)
Opossum (*manī*)
Flying fox (*tsūbak*)
Small variety of bat (*pupūtū*)
Iguana (*biro*)
Frogs, several kinds (generic term *kūra*) and tadpoles (*boboi*)
Insects of grasshopper species (*koka*)
Large white grub found in decaying wood (*pa'oa*)
Many kinds of birds (generic term *nōwan*)

3. *Sea food*

Many kinds of fish (generic term *ien*)
Many kinds of shell-fish (generic term *kesa*)
Crabs (generic term *kuri*)
Turtles (*gurut*)
Sharks (*kes*) (occasionally)

NOTES ON THE LIST OF FOODSTUFFS

1. *Vegetables, nuts, and fruit*

262 Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*, or *antiquorum*) may be considered the
244 staple food, since no meal, whatever else is included, is complete without it, and it will, if necessity arises, suffice for a meal by itself. But most people are not contented unless they have either fish or flesh as a relish (*kabu* or *warit*) to eat with it. Its cultivation occupies a very large proportion of the working time of both men and women, the men in clearing and fencing, the women in planting, weeding, and gathering. Many varieties of taro are known, differentiated by the colour of the tubers, or of the stalks or leaves, not according to taste or properties. One woman gave the names of twelve varieties in her garden, showing me each in turn from a heap she had just gathered, and pointing out their special characteristics. She said there were many more which she had not got in her garden.

137 The giant caladium, very similar in appearance to the cultivated
824 taro, except that it grows much taller, and that its leaves are much larger, grows wild in the bush. It is known as *wiar* ('bush taro').
[293] Its tubers are never eaten. The leaves attain a length of several feet, and are often used by the natives as umbrellas.

● 251 The women bring up each day from the taro garden only enough to last till the next day, or at most for two days. Probably because this quantity is as much as a woman can carry, no attempt is made to maintain a surplus store, although the tubers would keep for some time. One day the women could not go to the taro garden because some business connected with the *upi* made it dangerous

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for them to be on the road. The next day, several had to get up and go down early because they had nothing to eat.

In the case of those villages which are unfortunate in not possessing sufficient land of suitable quality for growing enough taro to meet their requirements, the women make regular trips to trade with the women of other villages, obtaining taro in exchange for other commodities, chiefly fish. Details of this system of barter will be found in Chapter XII.

The usual methods of cooking taro are either to boil it in a native pot (lined with banana leaves, which also cover the top, tucked in over the contents), or to roast it by laying it on the embers of a smouldering fire. In both cases it is first peeled or scraped (*kuiskuis*) with a knife (*nanes*) made of a black-lip oyster-shell which has been ground down to the hard pearly surface by rubbing on rough coral (Pl. 38, no. 3). These knives are preferred to trade knives for this purpose; the women say the trade knives spoil the taro. Two other kinds of shells, a conus (no. 4) and a dolium (no. 5), are occasionally used instead of the black-lip oyster. Taro is also cooked in a native oven (*ta'ō*). When a woman wishes to make such an oven (*nag a ta'ō*), she first scrapes out a hollow in the ground, probably inside the hut at the women's end of it, and then builds up a framework of sticks in it, by laying in two lines of sticks and some cross-pieces. This is then lighted from a smouldering log or the embers of a fire; when it has flamed up she places a quantity of round stones, about the size of a hen's egg, in the flames, and also throws on taro parings to make it flame up well. When the wood is burnt away and the stones are hot, water is thrown on the flames to make them die down and to produce steam, the food to be cooked is laid on the hot stones, and the whole is covered up with some of the hot stones and the dirt from the floor which was displaced in making the hole. The oven is left thus for several hours, being generally prepared in the evening and opened up on the following morning. When the cooked food has been taken out, the stones are carefully put away in a corner of the hut for future use.

Taro is never eaten raw; it would be as unpalatable as our own potatoes in the same state. It is liked either hot or cold, and is frequently prepared beforehand, placed in a basket made of plaited coco-nut leaves, and hung up in the rafters of the hut until required later in the day; it is not, however, kept for more than about twenty-four hours.

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crop was just about finished when I left at the end of September. Throughout the season they are brought in every day in large quantities, women and girls walking many miles to collect them, and spending hours hunting for them among the fallen leaves and underbrush that cover the ground everywhere in the bush (*ahuit winoa* = to gather almonds from the ground). I went with them on many occasions, and can testify to their diligence. The trees are much prized, and are always left standing when a patch of ground is cleared for a new taro garden.

The nuts are cracked with a stone or a lump of coral. They are always eaten immediately, unless it is desired to use them to make ceremonial pudding, when they are grated on rough coral, or pounded, and mixed with taro. So far as I know, these people do not store the nuts for future use, or smoke them as is done at Sa'a (Ivens, 1927, p. 367).

Ceremony for first almonds.

Up till recently a ceremony was performed, corresponding with that described by Ivens for the SE. Solomons (p. 367), on the occasion of the ripening of the first almonds. Owing to the disapproval of the native mission teacher, it did not take place in the year of my residence, but I obtained the following account of it.

When the first ripe nuts are discovered, probably by finding on the ground some whose fleshy, purple outer covering has been eaten by the pigeons, who throw down the hard centre, men collect stones suitable for cracking the almonds, and take them to the bush. Some of them climb the tree whose nuts are ripe first. Others stay below. Those in the tree throw down a large number of nuts and then come down and join those below. Some crack the nuts, others bring them to the men who are busy cracking them. The women must stop in the village, except for a few who go to the garden to bring back a supply of taro.

When the men have cracked plenty of almonds, they get a leaf of the bush banana and pour all the kernels into it. They all hold it by its edges and stretch it out to its full length. Two logs are cut and laid on the ground parallel to one another; short pieces of wood are laid on top of these transversely. The leaf full of almonds is laid on these transverse logs, and covered up with another banana leaf. The two leaves and their contents are then tied firmly together with rough cane or creeper, and the supporting logs are taken

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feast. Sometimes they are eaten as they are, almost raw, sometimes they are cooked a little more, by being placed on the fire a second time. 252

The procedure of cooking pigs is always the same as that above described. The men always attend to it throughout; women are allowed to be present and to look on, but they never take any part in the work. If several pigs are to be cooked, there may be quite a number of men engaged in the various operations. On one occasion I counted ten men busy over the cooking of four pigs (see Pl. 35). 252 462

Opossum are skinned and cleaned before being cooked. The animal is pulled apart at the joints, and each section, with the meat on it, is roasted separately by being laid on the fire and scorched, or wrapped in a package of leaves and cooked slowly in the embers of a smouldering fire. More rarely, they are smoked whole. I once, at a bartering expedition, saw a woman with a load of smoked opossums on her back; they looked exactly like mummied cats. Flying foxes are treated in the same way as opossum, and are much appreciated by the boys wearing the *upi* who may not eat the other animal at a certain stage in their rites. Bats of a smaller variety are cooked, frequently by children, by holding them over a fire. Iguanas are eaten only occasionally, if other flesh food has been scarce. 252 262 [251]

The bush abounds with insects of the grasshopper family, some reaching a length of 3 or 4 inches. These are considered great delicacies by the children, who toast them by impaling them on sticks held over a fire. They told me that these creatures were '*Tab en a dum tsū-u-u-u-u-u-n!*' 'Something very, very, very good to eat!' Adults are not above eating them when they feel so inclined.

The coast people will not eat snakes (*koro*), but they say the mountain people do so. This, however, was denied by those whom I had an opportunity of questioning on the subject, so it may be only a recognized form of insult. There are a number of stories in my collection dealing with people who inadvertently ate a snake, either by mistake for a *met'on* (sea slug), or through a mean trick played by some one else, who gives the man a piece of snake telling him it is opossum, an impertinence for which the practical joker, in most of the tales, pays with his life. 262 825 [578] 538

Several different kinds of frogs are used as food. The generic 262

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term is *kāva*, which is apparently onomatopoeic, somewhat resembling the noise the creatures make in the bush. Each variety has its own name. One, called *lululagitʃ*, is said to come down with the rain. Some kinds have special conventions attached to their consumption (see p. 158).

Birds, especially pigeons, are much appreciated as a relish with taro. They are usually roasted whole on the embers and pulled apart with the fingers. Domestic fowls are rarely eaten, and seem to be kept only for the sake of the cock's tail feathers, which are valued as hair ornaments on ceremonial occasions. The eggs of the domestic fowl are left alone, but those of the little black bush fowl or megapode (*iowa*) are eaten with gusto when nearly ready for hatching. They are done up in little packages of leaves and cooked in hot embers, usually only on festal occasions. I failed to live up to my motto, 'Try anything once', when offered a packet of this delicacy.

When any one walking through the bush comes upon the partly decayed trunk of a fallen tree, he will root about in the soft wood in search of a particular kind of grub, yellowish-white in colour, with a body 2 or 3 inches long and perhaps half an inch thick. These are collected, taken home, and cooked, to serve as an additional 'relish' to the evening taro. They are said to be good eating because they have 'plenty of grease' (*momōna*).

3. *Sea food*

Pig being a luxury usually reserved for feasts, and other flesh food being somewhat scarce and hard to come by, the usual relish to a meal of taro consists of fish. The most highly prized of all fish is the bonito (*atʃu*), but a great variety of fish can be obtained and nearly all are eaten. The various methods of catching them are described in Chapter IX.

Fish is generally cooked by being wrapped in leaves and roasted in the embers. I have never seen it being boiled. It may also be slightly smoked, so that it will keep for a short time (but never completely smoke-dried so as to be fit for storage.) In this half-smoked condition it plays the principal part as a medium of barter in the regular exchange of fish and taro which takes place between the women of different villages.

Many varieties of shell-fish are collected on the reef by the women and girls. These are boiled in native pots, and the fish is

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437 failing him, brother, son, or other male relative, to provide fish
438 for exchange. Sometimes a man would apologize for not selling me some fish for which I had asked him, on the ground that his wife would not have enough for the *toan* next day. A supply is [251] sometimes prepared in advance by half-smoking the fish so that they will keep for a short time. Each woman's load is her personal [422] property, and the goods for which she exchanges it are also her property, for the use of her own household. There is no pooling. If they are short of fish they will sometimes supplement it with sticks of tobacco.

437 I accompanied my friends from Petats on several trips to the mainland of Buka for this purpose. When the two parties met, packs were undone and a rapid inspection of fish and counting out of taro took place. The people of each party kept together; they went round holding out the goods they had to offer, and the buyers saw to it that the fish were of the appropriate size for the number of taro offered in exchange. I saw one woman try hard to obtain two small fish for four taro, but eventually she had to be content with one. Sometimes they would get very excited and snatch the fish and taro from each other, or two women would grab the same article, almost tearing it in pieces. Two of the Buka women brought loads of dried opossum, and these also were exchanged for [571] fish. The whole affair was got over as quickly as possible; there was very little gossip, and it was clearly regarded as a business, not a social occasion. Both sides began their homeward journey as soon as the exchange was finished, not stopping to chat or to chew betel, though we usually sat down to do so as soon as we were well [609] out of sight. Even now, there is a certain amount of distrust between the people of the coast and the people of the hills, though relations are outwardly friendly.

437 The fish-taro exchange is a permanent feature in the life of all
438 the villages in this area. In the case of exchanges between distant villages, appointments are made from one meeting to the next by [211] exchanging bits of string in each of which a knot has been tied for each day which is to elapse before the next excursion. Some specified individual is in charge of the string, and cuts off one knot each day till the time arrives. On the occasions on which I accompanied the party, we seldom waited for more than a short time before the other people arrived. Once, when they were rather longer in coming, some of the women wanted to go farther along